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STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

At the 3771st meeting of the Security Council, held on 24 April 1997 in connection with the Council's consideration of the item entitled "The situation in the Great Lakes region", the President of the Security Council made the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council is increasingly alarmed at the deterioration of the situation in Zaire and at the humanitarian consequences this is having on the refugees, displaced persons and other affected civilian inhabitants. It expresses its deep concern at the lack of progress in efforts to bring about a peaceful and negotiated settlement of the conflict in Zaire.

"The Security Council once again underlines the obligation of all concerned to respect the relevant rules of international law, including those of international humanitarian law.

"The Security Council is dismayed by the continued lack of access being afforded by the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo/Zaire (ADFL) to United Nations and other humanitarian relief agencies, and by the recent acts of violence which have hampered the delivery of humanitarian assistance. It reiterates the statement of its President of 4 April 1997 (S/PRST/1997/19) and in particular calls in the strongest terms upon the ADFL to ensure unrestricted and safe access by all humanitarian relief agencies so as to allow the immediate provision of humanitarian aid to those affected, and to guarantee the safety of humanitarian relief workers, refugees, displaced persons and other affected civilian inhabitants in the areas which the ADFL control.

"The Security Council also expresses its concern at the obstruction of the repatriation plan of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for eastern Zaire. It calls upon the ADFL and the Government of Rwanda to cooperate fully and without delay with UNHCR to enable the early implementation of the plan.

"The Security Council is particularly alarmed by reports of massacres and other serious violations of human rights in eastern Zaire. In this context, it calls upon the ADFL and others concerned in the region to cooperate fully with the recently established United Nations investigative

mission by ensuring unimpeded access to all areas and sites under investigation, as well as the security of the members of the mission.

"The Security Council reiterates its full support for the United Nations five-point peace plan, endorsed by its resolution 1097 (1997) of 18 February 1997. It calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities and calls upon the Government of Zaire and the ADFL to engage seriously and fully in the search for a speedy political solution to the problems in Zaire, including transitional arrangements leading to the holding of democratic and free elections with the participation of all parties. In this context, it calls upon the President of Zaire and the leader of the ADFL to meet as soon as possible.

"The Security Council warmly commends the efforts of the joint United Nations/Organization of African Unity (OAU) Special Representative for the Great Lakes region. It calls upon all States, in particular those in the region, to support these efforts and to refrain from any action that would further exacerbate the situation in Zaire.

"The Security Council reaffirms once again the importance of holding an international conference on peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region under the auspices of the United Nations and the OAU.

"The Security Council expresses its gratitude to the Secretary-General for keeping it informed of developments in the Great Lakes region and requests him to continue to do so on a regular basis.

"The Security Council will remain seized of the matter."